

## Ninety-Two by OTTSTF

**Series:** [Stranger Things - Early Reunions \[1\]](#)

**Category:** Stranger Things (TV 2016)

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**Characters:** Eleven (Stranger Things), Jim "Chief" Hopper, Mike Wheeler

**Relationships:** Eleven & Mike Wheeler, Eleven/Mike Wheeler

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**Summary:**

Ninety-two days. That's how long it's been since she vanished, and it's driving him insane.

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Another early reunion AU; this time *much* earlier.

# 1. Reunion

## Author's Note:

So this one's been waiting for a *while*.  
Writer's block still hasn't released me, so now I'm  
deciding I may as well toss this odd one out to you  
mighty-fine peeps.

"El? Are you there?"

"El?"

He sighs, knowing he won't get an answer. He's starting to think he'll never get one. Already, tears are forming in his eyes.

"Day ninety-two. I'm... I'm starting to fear the worst. All I can think of all day is you... how much we went through, how much *you* did for us, just to come to that end..."

Struggling to continue, he lays his Supercom on his knees and drops his face into his hands, and the floodgates open. He sobs as his thoughts are overridden with his final images of her. The thought that she's *gone* overwhelms anything else. Gone, all because of those *assholes* at the lab. If he could get his hands on *any* of them...

He's pulling on his hair, hard, nearly enough to pull it out. The pain doesn't phase him, because for all he knows, it's probably nothing compared to the pain she was in at the end. *She literally disintegrated*. She let herself be taken from this life to save everyone else. She didn't deserve that. She had so much ahead of her...

He feels like screaming, but he holds himself back; he doesn't really

feel like explaining his pain to his parents. His sobs continue, his eyes feel like they want to explode.

"Come back." he manages to mumble through his cries.

"Please, El, come back." He hiccups between sobs.

"I'll do anything for you to come back, to be alive and here."

He's breaking down and he knows it. In the back of his mind, he hears voices mocking him. *You only knew her for a week. The original plan was to find Will and send her back. That's exactly what's happened.*

To which he then argues against. *That was before I knew anything about her. She saved my life twice. She deserves to be happy, not stuck with them, or... dead.*

He feels a sudden cold breeze on his cheek, and he could swear he heard her voice.

"Mike..."

His head snaps up, he begins looking around the room frantically.

"El? El!? El where are you!?" he jumps to his feet, but nobody's there. He spins on the spot for a moment, trying to find the source of the voice, until he realises it must have been in his head. Slamming the antenna of his supercom down with more force then nessesary, he practically sprints to his bedroom. *I'm going insane. She's never coming back and it's going to kill me.*

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"Mike! Mike I'm here!" she tries to talk to him as he jumps up, obviously having felt her touch.

As he slams the antenna down and vanishes towards the stairs, she feels her world crumble apart. She doesn't know the words to describe it, but she can see how desperate he is. How much he *needs*

to know she's okay.

She yanks the blindfold off, which is soaked in her own tears, and smashes her back into her bed, flicking the TV off without as much as a flick of her head. It doesn't take long for her cries to become louder, to which Hopper knocks lightly on her door.

"El?" he calls, receiving no response.

"I'm coming in, okay?" he informs her, to which he still receives no response. Sighing, he opens the door. He sees her, eyes bloodshot, tears down her cheek. He feels his heart sink at the sight.

Sucking up his empathy, he approaches her, kneeling at the side of the bed.

"Is he okay?" he asks, knowing full well who these tears are for. She shakes her head.

"Do you want me to go check on him?"

After a few moments of consideration, she nods her head. She wishes he would just tell him that she's alive and well. Just that, so that he's not trying to pull his hair out every night, would be enough.

"Okay. Tomorrow. I'll talk to him after school." he tells her.

"Three, one, five." she remembers Mike's voice perfectly.

He nods his head. "Yeah, three fifteen. I promise."

She gives him as good of a smile as she can manage, which is contagious, he finds. He ruffles her hair, which is now a typical boy's length, before standing back up. He leaves her room, closing the door gently behind him, before returning to his own bed, letting thoughts run through his head.

*Maybe I should just tell him. Maybe if he swears to keep his mouth shut, he can know and still be safe. What if someone's listening? Talk in the car. What if someone's watching?*

*Bring him here.*

*These kids are going to be the death of me.*

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15:15. The final school bell rings, followed closely by the doors bursting open with kids running out as if they're taking part in a marathon. Hopper's parked just in front, leaning on his truck, looking out for the one particular boy he needs to speak to.

It takes a few minutes before he finds him, walking with his group of friends. *Absolutely not. One of them knowing is enough.*

Walking towards them, they notice him immediately.

"What's the chief doing here?" Dustin asks.

"How should I know?" Mike snaps back.

"You don't think..." Lucas begins to worry, but by then, Hopper's next to them.

"Michael. Can you come with me, just to the car?" he asks.

"What for?" he questions.

"Just a little talk. You're not in trouble, don't worry."

He looks to the others, who just shrug. Eventually he nods his head, leaving everyone else to walk with Hopper to his truck.

"Hop in." he tells Mike, opening the passenger side door for him like a goddamn chauffeur. He closes the door behind him before walking to his side of the truck, hopping into the driver's seat.

"What's this about, sir?" Mike asks Hopper, feeling a worry build inside. *What if the Upside-Down's got more plans for them?*

"Calm down, kid." he begins, knowing his fear. "Listen, I need you to

swear to me you can keep your mouth shut, okay?"

Mike's eyebrows furrow in confusion. "... Okay?"

"Kid, I'm serious."

"Okay, yeah, I swear."

They continue staring at each-other for a moment, before Hopper turns his head forward and starts the engine, beginning to drive. He plans on taking quite the scenic route, as to deter anyone watching them.

"Where are we going?" Mike asks, beginning to feel tense. He's kept track of where they are quite easily, having realised a while ago that Hopper's driving around pointlessly.

"I'll tell you when we get there." is all Hopper responds with.

A minute more of driving around, they finally arrive at a dead end, near the woods. Hopper shuts the engine off and turns to Mike.

"Right, listen carefully kid. I'm gonna take you to a little cabin. When we get there, I want you to knock on the door, like this." He shows Mike their special knock on the dash of the truck.

"You need to get that perfect, do you understand?"

Mike just nods his head, overwhelmed with confusion.

"Good. Come on then." he opens his door to climb out, shortly followed by Mike. The walk takes a minute or so, before they reach the tripwire. Hopper grabs Mike's shoulder, stopping him in his tracks. He points to the wire when Mike looks up to him.

"Tripwire. Watch your step." he tells Mike, before stepping over the wire himself. Mike follows suit, and then Hopper waves him on to the door to the cabin. He watches from the steps as Mike looks back at him. Hopper just nods his head.

Mike raises his hand, trying his best to remember the knock perfectly. *Two, one, three.* He places the knock onto the door, which is followed immediately by the sound of locks sliding open. He looks back to

Hopper, who just nods his head once again.

Hesitantly, Mike slowly opens the door. He looks around briefly, taking in the cabin's homely interior, before his eyes land on the sofa, or more importantly, who's there. He can't see her face, but he just knows, it's *her*. He must have audibly gasped, because her head suddenly turns to him. Immediately, her eyes widen.

"Mike!?" she nearly shouts, jumping to her feet, practically running at him. He can't move; he's overwhelmed with the shock of seeing her. She's alive, she's well. She's here, and he's here, and *holy shit this is real* he finally realises once she's grasping him tight. He's stunned for a moment, unable to believe this is actually happening. Eventually he raises his hands to return the hug, first soft, but then tightening his grip as he feels the tears in his eyes begin to fall; the relief of finally seeing her again too strong to keep in.

## 2. Contract

### Summary for the Chapter:

Tears are shared, thanks are given.  
Terms of visiting are agreed on by Mike and Hopper.  
Deals made, compromises realised.  
Happiness follows.

### Notes for the Chapter:

Ask, and you shall receive.  
I actually kinda have a plot for this AU now. *How exciting \o/*

It takes a good ten minutes before either of them are ready to let the other go. El's managed to tell Mike her story from waking up in the Upside-Down, finding the bad men at his house, living in the woods for a month before finally revealing herself to Hopper.

Two months. That's how long she's been in Hopper's care without him knowing. Part of him feels angry; he could've known right from the start, or he could've found her in the woods himself if he actually went looking rather than just calling on the SuperCom. But then she tells him that she heard every call, and it kept her going. That comforts him enough to relish his anger towards himself, and then Hopper.

It's only then that Mike finally manages to release El. He stands up slowly, before approaching Hopper. Hopper, after seeing how relieved Mike is now seeing her, expects him to lash out on him for keeping her hidden for two months. He's caught completely off-guard when the boy wraps his arms around him, seemingly trying to cut off his circulation with a hug. He's smiling up at the man, still with tears in his eyes.

"Thank you." he says. "For taking care of her."

The man is speechless. This is *not* the reaction he expected, but, even if he won't tell this to anyone, he much prefers it over what he had



expected. Sucking up the shock, he pats a hand on the back of the boy's head.

El watches, still sat on the sofa. She hears Mike's words, and she ponders on them for a moment. She realises she's never really thanked either of them for what they've done for her. Mike being the first person to give her a home of sorts, the first to treat her like a friend without a second thought. Hopper, the man who left food in a box for her every night, without even really knowing if it was her taking it. The man who gave her a home, who now takes care of her as if she's his own.

*Like a real father.*

She stands up now, approaching the two. She stops at their sides, wrapping her arms around both of them, and repeats Mike's words.

"Thank you." she glances between the both of them, gaze landing on Mike first,

"For being a friend," before then landing on Hopper.

"For being a better Papa."

The feeling Hopper gets in his stomach... he can't put it into words. *Eleven*, this literal superhero, just called him Papa. He has to blink to keep tears at bay (*don't you dare tell anybody that*), and will probably have to punch a wall to feel like a man again later; but for now, the smile on his face may as well be the only light source in this tiny old cabin of theirs.

He gets onto his knees before engulfing both of them in his arms.

"Thank you." he says to her through his enormous smile. "For trusting me."

Mike's sure he sees tears forming in the man's eyes, and smiles himself. This is a side of the *chief of police* he never expected to see in his life. But here we are: being held in his arms after finding out he'd taken Eleven in practically as his own daughter.

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All three of them eventually end at the dining table, a cup of hot chocolate between each of their hands. Hopper is the one to break the silence first, glaring at Mike.

"Wheeler, listen." he begins. The boy's gaze immediately lands on him.

"Before you ask: Yes. You can visit again." The boy's eyes practically jump out of their sockets.

"*But*, you need to promise me you'll stick to a few rules."

"I won't tell anybody!" Mike immediately jumps to what he knows is coming.

"I'll make sure I'm not followed. Hell, I'll come a different way each time."

Hopper's eyebrows raise; it's as if he himself just spoke through the boy, considering how accurately he took the first two points out of his mouth.

"Perfect, kid. Good job." he begins, pausing as he sees the smile on Mike's face grow.

"But listen. It can't be too frequent either. Even if you're going a different way each time; if anyone is still watching, and they see you going somewhere every day..."

"I understand." Mike says. "How often do you think would be safe?" he asks hesitantly, expecting a stress-inducing answer.

"Honestly?" Hopper begins his response. "I feel like I should be saying once a month at most."

He watches both of their faces drop immediately, and can't help but smirk.

"*But...*" they both immediately shoot back up.

"I know that'll be detrimental to my health in the long run." El's eyebrows furrow in confusion whilst Mike holds back a small laugh; living with El must be entertaining for the man, by the sounds of that.

"So I'm thinking, if nothing suspicious shows up... once, maybe twice

a week *could* be safe."

The smiles. Oh boy, *the smiles*, they're huge.

"As long as you have a cover story, I don't mind."

At that, Mike actually kind of flinches. *Oh shit... cover stories. How the hell am I going to manage that so often?*

"Sir... cover stories... what happens if my parents realise I'm lying? There's only a few stories I can use..." the fear in his face is probably visible from a mile back.

Hopper immediately thinks of something... and it causes him to drop his head in his hands. *The idea was to keep her secret... that's going really well right now.*

He rubs his face, looking back to Mike.

"I've got an idea... it scares the living hell out of me but it's all I can think of."

"What is it?" Mike asks enthusiastically.

"One. *One* of your friends are going to find out about El." he pauses, expecting Mike to try choosing, but he's greeted with an impatient silence instead.

"Will."

Secretly, Mike's relieved. Will is the one he'd say if it were his choice; being his best friend since kindergarten, he knows full well he can trust Will to keep his mouth shut. The other two, as much as he hates to say it, would probably end up outing the secret, most likely accidentally by saying something far too loud.

Even El's smile grows. Finally, she can meet the boy that, in a sense, caused their meeting in the first place. As horrible as the conditions were, El feels as if she should be thanking Will for everything, since she would have never run into Mike, Dustin and Lucas if he'd never gone missing.

"Mrs. Byers already knows who El is, and about her background. We can trust her. Same goes for Jonathan." he says. Mike nods his head, glancing to El with a smile as hers remains also.

"Tomorrow. I'll visit Mrs. Byers in work to sort out a meeting between us at their place. I want you to tag along too, Wheeler, so sort something out with Will, yeah?"

"Yeah!" he nods his head enthusiastically. "The others won't know, and I'll make sure Will knows to keep it from them as well."

Hopper nods his head. "Good man, Wheeler. Maybe, *just maybe*, this can work."

Mike glances back at El, his smile growing what seems infinitely. Without realising, he reaches out to squeeze her hand in excitement. She returns the gesture, knowing its meaning of pure excitement. Hopper rolls his eyes at the scene in front of him.

"When's your curfew, kid?" he asks Mike.

"Um... usually half six?" he answers.

"Right. Well we'll set off at twenty past then. You two can continue your catching up for now, if there's still anything for you to talk about."

They both smile. That gives them about two and a half hours together. He knows it'll fly past, but it's absolutely better than nothing. El jumps up and to both of their surprise, is the one dragging Mike, straight to her bedroom, for whatever reason. Hopper is about to demand the door stays open, but he bites his tongue.

*This is Wheeler we're talking about. He treats her as if she's royalty.* He smiles. Twelve is far too young to be thinking this, but if anyone's perfect for El, it's probably Michael Wheeler.

### **Author's Note:**

Do I continue this? I have no idea how I'd go about it, but if it's wanted, I'll damn well try.

Thanks for everything as always. Love you all! ♥